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1 Chronicles 4:23 With the King for His Work!

NO. 1400

(A motto for Sunday-school Teachers.)

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 1ST, 1877,

BY C.H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“These were the potters, and those that dwelt among plants and hedges: there they dwelt with the king for his work.”—1 Chronicles 4:23.

All labor is honorable. No man ever needs to be ashamed of an honest calling. Whether a potter or a gardener, or whatever else his occupation may be, the workman need never blush at the craft or toil by which he earns his honest wage. “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,” belongs to us all. The sluggard may well be ashamed of his sloth, not the diligent man of his industry. It is quite certain that the word of God does not disparage the humblest calling. I suppose that there is scarcely a trade or occupation which is not mentioned in sacred Scripture. The rough hand and the rugged face of the peasant are to be preferred before the dainty finger and the sleek form of the Pharisee. And the election of grace has comprised men of all sorts—herdsman and fisherman, brickmaker and tent maker; those who ploughed the soil, and those who ploughed the sea. From all ranks and classes and conditions of men God has been pleased to call forth his own; and he has loved them none the less because they have had to soil their hands with the potter’s clay, or bend their backs to till the field. Wretched is the clown who sits in the shade while his comrades work in the sun.

There is an honor then, and a dignity, too, in humble honest toil. The Bible itself does not disdain to record the humble craftsman’s name. To serve a king always was and still is deemed a thing to be desired. Those who do such duties claim some deference from their fellows. Work done well, however common, is accounted worthy of its wage, but work done for royalty generally has some special attraction to commend it. Such a man is privileged by appointment to be purveyor of this or that to her Majesty the Queen; and he takes good care to let us know it. It is published in his shop window. It is painted over his door. It is printed on his cards. It is pointed out on his bill-heads. He is “By appointment to the Queen.” Royalty seems to dignify him. But, beloved, there is a King whom it is real honor to serve—an honor which angels appreciate—which archangels delight in. That King is the King of kings, and of him we shall have to speak to-night, and of his service.

Earthly kings have many servants, and so has the King Eternal. I trust that many of us count it to be the very joy of our life that we call Jesus Christ our Lord and Master, and that to us it is the highest pleasure to serve him—to render to him all that our strength can possibly yield because we feel that we are debtors to him, and are bound, henceforth, in bonds of love to his divine service for ever and for evermore.

Looking at my text, I see three or four observations springing from it.

I. The first is this.

Since we have mention here of potters and those that dwelt among the plants and hedges with the king for his work, we infer that

Our King Has Many Kinds Of Servants. Other kings have servants of different sorts, and it would be the extreme of folly if one royal servant should say to another, "You are a nobody. You are of no use, because you cannot perform the offices which I am called to discharge." No brother must exult over his neighbor. He that is appointed to one office must fill it, and he ought to sympathise with the friend who fulfils any other office, but he should never exalt himself above him. The king has many kinds of servants.

Look at any one of our kings, and you find that they have soldiers. Until the halcyon days of peace shall arrive-may God speedily send them-I suppose there will always be standing armies and regiments of soldiers. Certainly, our great King, the King of kings, has many soldiers. It is their duty to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. They have to put on the panoply of God, and to contend, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual wickedness in high places. Full often they have to draw the sharp sword of controversy against doctrinal errors, which might come in to destroy the city of our God. Do not find fault with the Christian because he has soldierly qualities. There hath been no time since Christ went to heaven in which soldiers of Christ were not required. Until the last enemy shall have laid down his weapons, and infidelity and superstition shall be chased out of the world, we shall want these fighting men, who, with sword and shield, go forth to the conflict. They are your Master's servants. Pray for them.

But the king has his watchmen, too, who go not forth to fight, but stay at home and move about the city, especially by night. And do you know, I think the Lord's watchmen are mostly found amongst the sick. During the day, I suppose, there is little fear lest the incense of prayer should cease to rise up to the throne of heaven. But were we all in good health we might be all asleep, and no prayer might be ascending. From this island at a certain hour of the night, if all were locked in slumber, there would be no petitions going up; but it seems to me to be a part of heavenly ordinance that every hour shall be sanctified by prayer, as well the dead of night as the blaze of noon; and so he keeps some of his watchmen awake. They must pray. Their pains, their sleeplessness keep them devout. They lift up their hearts to the Most High. And so with a blessed cordon of prayer the night watches are surrounded, and the Lord does keep his flock safe from the wolf. I like to think of those who cannot come out to the assembly, and cannot take part in any of the active exercises of evangelization, who, nevertheless, can on their beds keep watch for the Lord. "Ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence, and give him no rest until he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." These are his remembrancers -these consumptives, these sick folk, who in the gloomy hours of night keep awake and pour out their heart like water before the Lord. Now, let not the soldier despise her that tarries at home, for she divideth the spoil. Let not Barak exult over feeble Jael who keepeth the tent, for it may be that her prayer shall drive the nail through the adversary's brow; and it shall not fall to Barak to be honored, but unto the humble stay-at-home. Oh, watch, ye watchers. Plead much, ye intercessors. Ye are the Lord's servants. Active and passive duties are alike valuable, and God accepts them; let not one, therefore, exalt himself against the other.

There are some of my Master's servants that are his heralds. You know that great kings have their trumpeters to go and proclaim for them. This is an honorable office, and one to which I trust many a young man here will aspire-to be a herald of the cross to publish salvation. Get ye up to the high mountains and lift up your voice. Lift it up. Lift it up with strength. Say unto the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!"

But in every court there are scribes as well as heralds, the king's registrars that have to keep the chronicles and the records. So our great King has his scribes-the men of Issachar that can handle the pen, they whose hearts indite the good matter, for they speak of the things which they have made touching the king as the pen moves across the page. Well, whether it be by the spoken utterance of the tongue, or by the silent but vigorous expression of facts, thoughts, and feelings, we must be equally grateful for every opportunity to do anything for Jesus. And instead of beginning to question, "Which is the more valuable?" let each one seek to make his own department of the Master's service as complete and efficient as he can.

Our King, too, has his musicians, as other monarchs have, who play before them to make a goodly sound upon an instrument. And I do delight in those of my Master's servants who can dedicate musical talents to him, and give us, first of all, the sweet poetry with which we adore him in psalm and song; and after that the sweet tunes which help us with united voice to magnify the Lord. Then there are sweet voices which help us of gruffer note in some way to keep harmony, and so together to praise God. God be thanked for the brother who has the voice of melody. Let him consecrate it to his Lord, and train it, and use it always with discretion, not perhaps too loudly, and yet sometimes not too softly either.

Still in a king's house they do not all sing. They cannot. There are some that make no melody. Servants are there in the royal palace that make no music except it be with the brush and the broom; or whose music consists of the motion of their willing feet as they wait at the table, or as they go from chamber to chamber upon the royal errand. Now, let not those who can sing his praises exalt themselves above those who can perform the lowliest service for the Lord. And let not those who are performing the real service of life think that there is something about their labor that is more acceptable than the singing of Jehovah's praise, for it is not so. Each one in his own order, all acting with the right motive, all helping to take their part in the right spirit, and all shall be equally acceptable with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Here is a great variety of servants. I cannot stop to go through them all, but you see the text mentions some of them called potters. I

do not know but they may supply a very good emblem of Sunday-school teachers. Let them not be ashamed of the metaphor, for I cheerfully put myself with them, as I hope the minister may have some claim to be classed among the King's potters. What do the potters do but take the clay while it is yet plastic and soft to put it on the wheel and make the wheel revolve, and then with thumb and finger fashion the clay as it revolves before them, to make a vessel fit for the royal use? Well, dear Sunday-school teachers, if ever at any time the human mind is plastic it is while a child is young. We should any of us find it hard to learn who never had studious habits till we reached the age of thirty years or upward. Many a man is willing enough to be a student, but he has not the faculty for it. His skull-case has become set and hard and tight, and he cannot make his brain work as he could have done if he had begun earlier; but with the younger folk-oh what an opportunity there is to do a world with them! We cannot fashion them unless the hand of the Lord be with our hand-unless God makes their hearts soft-unless he puts them on the wheel for us, but if he does that, oh how a mother's hand can mould her boy! How a teacher's heart can mould the boy or girl committed to him or her, and how throughout life the men and women of the future will bear about them the marks of the teachers of to-day. You are the King's potters. May he help you to do the work aright.

And then there is another class of workers mentioned, and those, I think, are like Sunday-school teachers too-those that dwell among plants and hedges. These were the king's gardeners. They dwelt in sheltered places-in enclosures that were protected by hedges to keep off the wind and so retain the heat. They lived in pleasant retreats where rare plants could grow. Now this is just what the Sunday-school teacher should be. He tries to get the plants out from the wild waste and bring them into the

"Garden walled around,

Chosen and made peculiar ground;

The little spot enclosed by grace,

Out of the world's wide wilderness."

He knows the church is the garden of the Lord and he longs to plant many little slips in it. And I bless God that there are some teachers that my eye rests upon who have planted many little slips that have been growing well. I thanked God when I saw them first take root: I blest the Lord when it was my business to water them as it is mine now, and that of their teachers still; and I hope it will be the business of the teacher, and the pastor too, to gather much fruit from these little plants that we dwell among, that we plant, and that we water, and that we tend. Dear friends, if you are engaged in this service, it is a right honorable one. The first man was a gardener, and the second man-the Lord from heaven-was supposed to be a gardener, and the supposition was not untrue, for never was there such a garden as he planted. It is he who makes the wilderness to rejoice and blossom as the rose. Because of his own excellency, and because of the plants that he has nurtured, the church is a garden of unparalleled renown.

Thus there are many servants of our great Master; and I will only say this much more concerning them: how blessed it is to be included in the number. Oh, one does not mind what department he takes so long as he may but serve Christ. I have often prayed by myself a prayer like this: "Lord make me the door-mat of the church. Let everybody wipe his boots upon me. Let me bear the mud and the mire so long as my Master's temple may be kept clean by me." And I think any Christian man will wish to take the lowest and most menial place so that he may be accounted of by our Lord as among "his servants who serve him." The scullions in Christ's kitchen are more honorable than the counsellors of an imperial court. They that have to do the worst and blackest work, if such there be to be done for the great Master, have a higher esteem in the judgment of perfect spirits than those that rule empires, conduct armies, but know not the fear of God.

II. I proceed to our second observation: All Who Live With Our King Must Work.

Read the text. "There were the potters and those that dwelt among plants and hedges: there they dwelt with the king for his work." They did not live on the king's bounty and dwell on the king's country estates to do nothing, but they dwelt there for his work. I do not know whether all that call my Master "Lord" have caught this idea. I have thought that some of our church members imagine that the cause of Christ was a coach, and that they were to ride on it, and that they would prefer the box seat, or else a very comfortable seat in the middle of the coach. Nor do they wish to be incommoded by too many fellow travelers: they do not like to be pressed for room even in the pews: they would rather sit at ease, solace themselves with their own dignity, and ride to heaven in a quiet, respectable, comfortable sort of way. In fact, it would appear to me as if some of our friends imagined that when a man becomes a believer he may repose on a silken couch and be carried to glory in a palanquin, never needing to do anything afterwards, but simply to dream himself into everlasting felicity. They get a nice creed that drugs their conscience; they settle down in some snug corner where they defy anybody to disturb their security; they select a sound minister who runs on one line that he never leaves; they listen sometimes, not often too earnestly, to the plan and promises of the gospel; and when they have listened they say they are fed. And if they ask about a minister, the question is, "Are you fed?" When it has got as far as the feeding their interest is exhausted. With the work of faith and the labor of love they never meddle. But let me assure you as a matter of fact that they that

live with our King must work. They do not work that they may live with him, but they work because they live with him. Because his grace has admitted them into his courts, therefore from that time they begin to work with all diligence. And why is this? What motive prompts them?

Well, first, because he works. Jesus said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." The most wonderful worker in the universe is God himself; and his dear Son, when he was here, never had an idle hour. "He went about doing good." He began life as a carpenter, and, I do not doubt, worked hard at it. Then as a Savior he surveyed on the outset his great charge "to fulfill all righteousness." With untiring zeal he pursued his arduous mission to the end, and he finished his work. Until he said, "It is finished," he did not relax his ardor or lay down his toil. Brethren, we cannot dwell with the great working God and yet be sluggards. He will not put up with it. He will not have communion with us unless we are agreed with him. "How can two walk together unless they be agreed?" Are you an active-minded person, and have you had a servant that you could not stir or hasten or make her move with agility? Or have you had a workman who took one step to-day and another to-morrow? Why, it gives you the fidgets. It makes your flesh creep. You do not know what to do. You cannot bear it. You take hold of the broom, or whatever else he is pretending to handle, and turn to; for you would sooner do the work yourself. Your patience is exhausted. Now, a glorious and active-minded God will not walk with sluggards. He cannot endure them. If you are to dwell with God you must be his servant, you must have something to do in his name; in whatever occupation it may be, to lay yourself out for his glory is essential and imperative.

The next reason why those that dwell with him must work, is that his company always inspires us with the desire to do something for him. You never spent a happy hour alone in private prayer holding privileged communion with God when you did not feel constrained to say, "Lord, show me what thou wouldst have me to do." You never enjoyed full assurance of faith without the question coming to you, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me?" You cannot look at him on the cross bleeding, pouring out his soul unto death for us, without feeling that the couch of inglorious ease would ill befit a faithful disciple's favored fellowship with him. You crave that your hand should find something to do, and that your tongue should have something to say. You yearn for some opportunity of sounding forth his dear praises. You may go where you will if you want to be idle, but you cannot go to the cross and come away a sluggard. The nails of it do prick us into sacred industry. They are the spurs of Christian duty. The agonies of our self-sacrificing Lord inspire us with such ardor, that we feel we must serve him, and take it as a favor, not as a tax. It is a delight rather than a duty to lay ourselves out for him.

When you get into Christ's courts, there is so much to do that you cannot help doing something. If you are a member of an active church you find yourself called upon this way and that way to spend and to be spent for Christ. In such a hive drones are despicable. If you live where there are young converts, where there are tried believers, where there are backsliders, where there are hopeful penitents;-as these come under your notice you perceive that your Master's house is full of service, and you cannot refrain from taking some share in it, and taking it eagerly, anxiously, and cheerfully.

Nay, a true Christian cannot stroll outside his Master's house without feeling calls to service. Can you walk these streets and have your ears assailed, as I grieve to say you must, with the filthiest language from working men,-who seem, to my mind, to have become more coarse in their talk the last ten years than they used to be,-can you go down a street and have your blood curdle at the frequent oath without feeling that you must be up and doing? Can you see these streets swarming with children and not come forward to help the Sunday-school? Can you watch the multitudes of boys and girls streaming out of the Board School and not say to yourself. "What is done with these on the Lord's day? Others must be hard at work with them, why am I not doing something?" Everywhere, on all hands, work is suggested, and especially by the activity of our adversaries. See how they compass sea and land to make one proselyte! See how the devil incessantly goes about seeking whom he may devour! He appears to have lost his eyelids. He never sleeps. He is intent continually upon devouring the souls of men; and all the incidents and accidents we meet with say to us, "Are you Christians? Then bestir yourselves. Are you the King's servants? Then be up and doing, for there are ten thousand things that must be done at once, if done at all, without waiting to discuss the best way of doing them."

At any rate, of this thing you may be quite certain. The professor of true religion who is negligent in his Lord's service must and will lose the comforts of his Lord's presence. I speak not, of course, of those who are sick, infirm, or helpless, for as I have already explained, by their patience and resignation and intercession they are exercising a very important part of the work of the Lord's house, but I speak of those of you who might be actively engaged, and I regard it as a rule without exception that sluggish Christians become uncomfortable. When you meet with a brother or sister in Christ who is always grievous, complaining of doubts and fears, sighing and groaning, crying and moaning over an experience that puzzles rather than profits, you need not ask many questions, for you may safely interpret all the symptoms. That person does not teach in the Sunday-school. That person does not go out preaching in the villages. That person is very likely doing nothing. An earnest worker may be occasionally beset with temptations, but he will not be perpetually bewildered with these throes of anxiety. If that be the regular, habitual condition of the man, it looks as if he had a want of occupation. There be many flies and moths and spiders and cobwebs in the chambers of the indolent. Surely they would be brushed away if there were more activity for Christ. I think any minister will tell you it is the people who do nothing themselves in a church that find fault with those who do the work. With great discernment they can always discover flaws in the policy and practice of

the earnest brethren who take the pains and do the drudge of office. Bless their hearts, why do they not do it better themselves? No, not they. They seem to think that their department in the sacred household is to find fault with their Master's servants. Now I have looked all over his house, for I have been for years in it, occupying an official position; I have pried over my Master's books, and I have been into his record office, but do you know I have not found anywhere that he has ever issued appointments to any ladies or gentlemen to be the supervisors and censurers of his servants. I believe they act without commission and that they will probably go without any wages. Or if all service rendered meets with an equitable retribution, and the wages of sin is death, their carpings will bring them no comfort, and their revilings will be requited with bitter remorse. O brothers and sisters, there is no colourable excuse for your culpable inactivity. Christ walks at a quick pace. If you want to walk with him you must not loiter. He is no friend to the sluggard. I cannot always tell you where fellowship with him may be found, but I can tell you where it can never be enjoyed. He is not where idlers lounge and congregate to gossip with gibe and jeer, with slur and sneer, railing at the very men whose conduct proves their conscience so pure that they would blight their own interests to bless the Lord's cause. But he is with his people who are diligently devoted to his service and seek to him for strength to do that service well. Those that live with our King must work.

III. Now, thirdly, Those That Work For Our King Ought To Live With Him.

That is the other side of it, for these potters and these gardeners dwelt with the king for his work. I offer to the Sunday-school teachers of the south side of London a motto which may last them for life: "With the King for his work." Put that up now over your mantelpieces. "With the King for his work." Work by all means, because you are with the King; but get with the King by all means, because you want to do his work. Oh, how important it is that every good servant of our heavenly Master should be with him. Why? Do you ask me; why? Because you cannot know his will if you do not live with him. He that lives with Christ gets his orders every day; and oftentimes from moment to moment he gets guidance from his great Lord's eye. He says, "Thou shalt guide me with thine eye." You know how a servant in the house watches her mistress. The mistress does not need always to speak. Perhaps it is at a dinner. There is a number of guests. She does not keep calling, "Mary," and instructing her in measured sentences to attend to the various requirements, but by a simple movement of her head, or a quiet glance of her eye, Mary can understand all her mistress means. Now, those that live with Jesus Christ have a sort of secret alphabet between themselves and him. Oftentimes when a Christian man does the right thing, you read as a story, or as an anecdote that enlivens a book, how strangely wise he was, how he dropped the fit word at the fitting moment, how he had a knack of giving the right answer to one who wrongly assailed him. Do you know why he had that knack? He lived with his Master, so he knew what you knew not. He knew the meaning of his Master's eye, and it guided him. Oh, I believe if Sunday-school teachers and ministers live with their Lord they will be made wise to win souls. Oftentimes things they never thought of saying they will say exactly at the right time to the right persons, and so surprising will it be to the persons addressed that they will almost think that you must have been told about them. Keep close to your Master, and then you will know your Master's will.

Why should workers live with the Lord, but that they may gather strength? Every hour of communion with Christ. is an hour of increased vigor. In the old fable when Hercules fought with the giant he could not kill him. He flung him down with all his might, and Hercules could fling a fellow about. He thought he had dashed him to pieces, but every time he got up stronger than before, so down he flung him again. "Surely," he thought, "if I have destroyed the hydra and the lion I can kill this man-this giant." But up the giant sprang again, because the old fable said that the earth was his mother, and every time that he fell he touched his mother and got new life from her. So every time a Christian falls on his knees, draws near to his God, he gets a touch of his great Father, and he gets new strength. When the devil throws a Christian to his knees-throws him down with such force, too, that he thinks, "I will crush him," he gets up and is stronger than the devil again. Over he goes again. He trips him up, flings him down, but every time he falls to praying he rises from before the mercy-seat like a giant against the foe. Oh, then, dwell near the Lord, for that is the source of your strength as well as your knowledge.

Why should workers dwell with the King? Surely it is thereby to keep up their enthusiasm. Humanly speaking, the very soul of Christianity is enthusiasm. Cold religion-well, there are some cold things that give one a chill to think of. Cold religion! It is the most ghastly spectacle on which a pure and fervent heart can look. Cold religion! Ugh! It is nauseous. There is only one thing worse, and that is a cool, listless profession; for Jesus Christ tells us that the lukewarm made him sick outright. To the Laodicean, said the faithful and true witness, "I would thou wert cold or hot," "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." Let your faith be at furnace heat. Religion cannot long be lukewarm; it will either die out or it will kindle and set you all on fire. If it consume a man, then it only reaches the heat at which Jesus Christ lived. Somebody has very properly said, "Bloodheat is the healthy heat for a Christian's soul." So it is. But what is the blood-heat? The heat of our great atoning sacrifice-the blood-heat of our blessed Redeemer when he sweat great drops of blood, and gave himself for us. Would God we were filled with such flaming zeal. But ah! you never can attain unto it except you live with him. The world is cold and icebound, and the church is chill and pierced with the east wind. Would you get into the tropics where fruits luxuriant grow? Live near to Christ, then you will become enthusiastic, and pursue your work with a fervor all divine.

We must live with our King too, that we may be inspired with courage. I suppose some teachers are timid. I know some preachers are haunted with strange fears. The way to quicken courage is to look the King in the face. When you see how patiently he endured reproach, and how resolutely he proceeded with his ministry of love, even to die for us, you will not be afraid of the faces of men, nor will you shrink from duty because nervous friends warn you of danger.

And you had need live with the King if you would cultivate the soft grace of patience. Sunday-school work is very trying. It often vexes the soul, and you get weary. But when you go and look at him and see how he failed not, neither was discouraged, but went through with the work which he undertook till he could say, "It is finished," you will chide your soul for all its futile excitement and feverish unrest. By your patience and perseverance you will approve yourselves as children of God and followers of Christ.

In fine, dear friend, I do not know that a person can do anything for our Lord Jesus Christ aright without living in communion with him. I am persuaded that Martha got into trouble about that dinner of hers, because she did not mix with her serving the sitting at the Savior's feet with Mary. I am sure that we can attempt too much and accomplish too little; for we can do apparently a great deal, but because we have not had power with God, very little may come of it. Steeped seed is the best for Sunday-school teachers. It is always well to take care that the good seed you bring to the little plots-your children's little minds-has been laid in soak the night before in earnest prayer. It is wonderful how quickly it sprouts and what a deal of vitality it manifests if you put it asoak. The dry seed-dry teaching without any praying- without any communion with God-may be productive, but it is a long time in coming up and yielding a reward for your labor.

Believe me, my dear brothers and sisters, that to abide near to Jesus is the very life of Christian service. I would have you feel and speak on this wise, "I am engaged in the service of the King. Fifty little children I have under my charge-all infants-and I am trying to teach them something, but they are all full of fun, and I cannot get anything into their little heads, but it would never do to think of giving it up, because I am doing it for Jesus. I would not do it for anybody else." Or, "I have got half-a-dozen unruly boys in the ragged school. I would not undertake the work of this school for the biggest salary that could be offered me, but I can do it for Jesus Christ, and I will do it for the love and gratitude I feel to him; in fact, I am happy in doing it because I know that he is looking on-that he sees all that I do-for if nobody else appreciates my service he does, and he will accept me, and he will help me, and some blessed result will come of it, so I will tax all my energies to the task as the workman wakes up when there is a king watching. With what care and diligence he will exercise his highest skill! So let thy task be performed with all thy might, for if done for him it ought to be done well. Nothing should be slurred over in a slovenly fashion that is done for Jesus. This thought, that I am with the King is animating and helpful to me, I can assure you beyond any description of its influence that I can convey to you.

IV. Now to our last point, upon which only a few words.

That which should reconcile us to live in any place is that we may work for the King in it; and that which should reconcile us to any work is that We Are Working For The King. "These were the potters that dwelt among plants and hedges: there they dwelt with the king for his work." In any place where you dwell you can dwell with the King. These pottery men and gardeners were on the king's estate. You need not live next door a church; you need not live with a pious family to have God with you. Oh, bless the Lord, I have met with my Lord and Master by the bedsides of the sick in Kent-street, many a time. My friend Mr. McCree has met the Lord many a time in a cellar in St. Giles's; and he is often to be found in Bethnalgreen and Shoreditch-in the very worst habitations that ever human beings dwelt in. Dwell wherever you may-on the land or on the sea, in the hospital or in the workhouse,-you may still dwell there with the King. He does not want any carpets. He does not care about rich furniture. In fact, he does not often come where the floors are covered with Turkey carpets. I think the scarcest place for Christ is with the rich; they seldom have much to say about him. I speak not of them all, but of very many. If for my part I want half an hour's real talk about Jesus Christ I must visit the poor man. I do not know how others find it. It is so; it is sadly so, in my experience. Well, wherever you dwell and whatever your rank, you may have the Lord dwelling with you; and this ought to reconcile you to dwell anywhere, if you can serve the Lord. I always find that when men are converted if they live in a very bad neighborhood, they try and get out of it. That is right enough. I think if I were living in some neighbourhoods the sooner I could change my residence the better pleased I should be. At the same time, in an ill locality a good man is a great boon. Where is a bright lamp more wanted than down in a dark alley? Where is the pure light most wanted? Is not it amongst the depraved and profligate? Sometimes I almost fear that the repugnance with which Christian people fly away from a bad district is a misfortune for the population, especially for the young who are left behind. Of the sympathy that might be felt, and the good that might be done by their being there, the inhabitants are henceforth bereft. My dear brother, if you are placed in the very midst of ribald wickedness, an opportunity to serve the Lord where Satan's seat is might induce you to stop there awhile with the self-denial of a missionary among the heathen. It may be that it is cowardly and craven to run away. Rather should it become you to say, "I am put into this fort in the midst of the enemy, and I mean to keep it; my fixed purpose is to hoist the flag of Christ on the top of it, and instead of deserting the post to strive incessantly to win souls for him." At any rate, if you are compelled to live in neighbourhoods that you do not like, it ought to be some comfort to you that the King will live there with you, and that perhaps he has placed you there to try your faith, to honor his name, and to bless the outcasts. Go, beloved, wherever you reside and realize

that your abode is a station you are appointed to occupy for his work. Let the nurse-girl in the family, with the little ones about her, live for Christ and lose no opportunity of letting her light shine. Let the artizan, thrown into the large workshop, where there are none like himself, account that he is put there for the King's work. The tradesman, dealing with many who like to have a word across the counter, should order his conversation for the glory of Christ. The merchant, who will be sure to make many friends in business, should not forget his Lord, but bear a faithful testimony as often as he can. The employer of many hands should take care that he seeks the welfare of their souls, and consider by what manifold agencies he can promote the King's work. You that have leisure, dear friends, should feel that your spare time is a sacred trust, to be squandered never, but to be consecrated ever to the King's work. You that have talents should feel the like imperative obligation—yea, and especially you that have only one talent! It was the man of one talent that buried it. So it commonly is. You have not much talent you think—nothing brilliant. Then the temptation is to go and bury your bit of bronze because you cannot display any glittering gold. Your conscious weakness produces a wicked conceit. Do not withhold your mite from the treasury because you have not a million to contribute. Live still with the King for his work.

Doubtless I have been addressing some who have never served the King, who do not know him, who do not love him. I am not going to ask you to work for him. No, no. My Lord wants none to work for him who do not believe in him. "Come and trust him." Our soldier friends over there, a sprinkling of whom I am pleased to see, and proud to salute, know how to enlist in the service. How does a man first become a soldier? Well, he receives a shilling. He receives, and then he is a soldier. He that will receive Christ is made a soldier of Christ. It is receiving you have got to begin with. And after you have received Christ then you shall go forth and serve him. Put out an empty hand and receive Christ into it by a little faith, and then go and serve him, and the Lord bless you henceforth and for ever. Amen.

1 Chronicles 13:8, 12, 15:25

The Lesson of Uzza

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"And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing and with harps and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets." — 1 Chronicles 13:8.

"And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the ark of God home to me?" — 1 Chronicles 13:12.

"So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the house of Obed-edom with joy." — 1 Chronicles 15:25.

David had, in his heart, an intense love to God. During Saul's reign, God had been well-nigh forgotten in the land. The ordinances of his house had been almost, if not entirely, neglected; and when David found himself firmly seated upon his throne, one of his first thoughts was concerning the revival of religion, the reestablishment of that form of worship which God had ordained in the wilderness by the mouth of his servant Moses. So he looked about him to see where the ark of the covenant, that most sacred of all the ancient symbols, was; and he wrote, "We heard of it at Ephrath: we found it in the fields of the wood." Out of pure love and reverence to God, he called the people together, consulting with them so that the thing might not be done by himself alone, but by the nation. It was agreed that the ark should be brought up, and placed upon Mount Zion, near the palace of the king, in a conspicuous position where it should be the center of religious worship for the entire nation. It was to be placed near that sacred spot where Abraham had, of old, offered up his son Isaac, that, in the great days of assembly, the Israelites might wend their way thither, and worship God as he had commanded them.

David's intention was right enough, no fault can be found with that; but right things must be done in a right way. We serve a jealous God, who, though he overlooks many faults in his people, yet, nevertheless, will have his word revered, and his commands obeyed. "Be ye clean," says he, "that bear the vessels of the Lord." He will be honored by those that attempt to draw nigh to him. So it came to pass that, though David had a good intention, and was about to do a right thing, yet, at the first, he had a great failure. When we have considered the cause of that failure we shall note that this failure wrought in David a great fear; and when we have meditated for a while upon that fear, we shall see that, when he set to work to honor his God after the due order, he did it with such a great joy that, perhaps, we have scarcely another instance of such exuberance of spirit in the worship of God as we have in the case of David, who leaped and danced before the ark of the Lord with all his might.

I. First, then, we are to consider David's Great Failure.

It followed almost immediately after. "David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets." This was David's first attempt to bring up the ark of the covenant into the place appointed for it.

Observe, dear friends, that there was no failure through lack of multitudes. It is, to my mind very delightful to worship God with the multitude that keep holy day. I know some people who think themselves the only saints in the whole world. They do not imagine that any can be the elect of God if there are more than seven or eight, "because," say they, "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it;" and, therefore, simply because they are few in number, they straightway conclude that they have passed through the strait gate into the narrow way. It needs far better evidence than that to prove that they are in the right road; and, for my part, I love, as David did, to go with the multitude to the house of God, to keep time and tune with many hearts and many voices all on fire with holy devotion as they lift up the sacred song in a great chorus of praise unto the Most High. There was no failure, in that respect, on this occasion, for "David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor of Egypt even unto the entering of Hemath, to bring the ark of God from Kirjath-jearim." Thus they came, from all parts of the land, in their hundreds and their thousands, an exceeding great multitude; yet their attempt to bring up the ark proved a sad failure. So, you see that it is of little value merely to gather crowds of people together. However great the multitude of nominal worshippers may be, it is quite possible that they may offer no worship that is acceptable to God. We, ourselves may come and go in our thousands, yet that alone will not guarantee that the presence of God is among us. It would be far better to be with a few, if God were in the midst of them, than to be with the multitude, and yet to miss the divine blessing.

Neither was there any failure so far as pomp and show were concerned. It seems that these people paid very great honor, in their own way, to this ark; putting it on a new carriage, and surrounding it with the princes, and the captains, and the mighty men of the kingdom, together with the multitudes of the common people of the land. I doubt not that it was a very imposing array that day; and, truly, the solemn worship of God should be attended to with due decency and order, yet it may be a failure for all that. Sweet may be the strain of the sacred song, yet God may not accept it because it is sound, and nothing more. The prayer may be most appropriate so far as the language of it is concerned, yet it may fail to reach the ear of the Lord God of Sabaoth. Something more is needed beside mere outward show, something beyond even the decent simplicities of worship in which we delight.

Neither was there any failure, apparently, so far as the musical accompaniment was concerned. We are told, in our text, that "David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets." I like that expression, "with all their might." I cannot bear to hear God's praises uttered by those who simply whisper, as though they were afraid of making too much noise. Nay, but,

"Loud as his thunder, sound his praise,

And speak it lofty as his throne;"

for he well deserves it. Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof, in praise of its great Creator. Let all the winds and the waves join in the concert; there cannot be any sound too jubilant for him who is worthy of the highest praise of heaven and earth. It is right to sing unto the Lord with all your might; yet there may be a certain kind of heartiness which is not acceptable to God because it is natural, not spiritual. There may be a great deal of outward expression, yet no inward life. It may be only dead worship, after all, despite the noise that may be made. I do not say that it was altogether so in David's case; but, certainly, all the multitude, all the pomp, and all the sound, did not prevent its becoming an entire failure. What was the reason for that failure!

If I read the story aright, it seems to me, first, that there was too little thought as to God's mind upon the matter. David consulted the people, but he would have done better if he had consulted God. The co-operation of the people was desirable, but much more the benediction of the Most High. There ought to have been much prayer preceding this great undertaking of bringing up the ark of the Lord; but it seems to have been entered upon with very much heartiness and enthusiasm, but not with any preparatory supplication or spiritual consideration. If you read the story through, you will see that it appears to be an affair of singing, and harps, and psalteries, and timbrels, and cymbals, and trumpets, and of a new cart and cattle; that is about all there is in it. There is not even a mention of humiliation of heart, or of solemn awe in the presence of that God of whom the ark was but the outward symbol. I am afraid that this first attempt was too much after the will of the Flesh, and the energy of nature, and too little according to that rule of which Christ said to the woman at Sychar, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Yes, beloved, all worship fails if that is not the first consideration in it. Let the singing be hearty and melodious, let everything in our services be in proper order; but, as the first and most important thing, let the Holy Ghost be there, so that we may draw near to God in our heart, and have real spiritual communion with him. The outward form of worship is a very secondary matter; the inward spirit

of it is the all-important thing; there appears, to me, to have been too little attention paid to that in the first attempt that David made to bring up the ark; and, therefore, it was a failure.

One very important omission was that the priests were not in their proper places. They appear to have been there, but they were, evidently, not treated as their position entitled them to be. The men of war were brought to the front, and the men of worship were pushed aside. Now, in all true worship, the priest is of the first importance. "What," you ask, "do you believe in a priest?" Yes, in the great High Priest of whom the Aaronic priesthood was the type; all my hopes for time and eternity are centered in him who is "a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." If you do not put him into the first place, I care little what sort of worship you render, you may be very intense, and very devout, after your own fashion, but it is all in vain. There is no way of coming unto God except through the "one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." There is no way of approaching God except through the one great High Priest, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You may cry unto God, but your prayers cannot reach his ear until Christ presents them to his Father. You may bring your sweet spices, but they will never have any fragrance before the Lord until the great High Priest puts them into the golden censer, and mingles with them the precious incense of his own merits, and so makes them acceptable before the Lord. A prayer without Christ in it will never reach heaven. Praise, which is not presented through the merits of Christ, is but a meaningless noise which can never be well-pleasing unto God.

These people not only had not the priests in their proper places, but they also had a cart, instead of Levites, to carry the sacred ark. The laboring oxen took the place of the willing men who were appointed by God for this service David and all the people appear to have forgotten the appointments which God made concerning the ark, so they fell into trouble, and all their efforts proved to be a failure.

Next, I notice that, the first time, there were no sacrifices. They put the ark upon the cart, and went before it, and behind it, and around it, with their instruments of music, but there was no sacrificial blood shed. They had been so long out of the habit of worshipping God in his appointed way that they had forgotten very much. I wonder that David did not notice this fatal omission, and I am not surprised that Uzza died as there is no mention of the sprinkling of blood upon the mercy-seat that day. And, beloved, if we leave the blood of atonement out of our worship, we leave out that which is the very life of it, for the blood is the life thereof. If you have no respect unto the atoning sacrifice of Christ, God will have no respect unto you. If you have no regard for the great propitiation which Christ has made for sin, the Lord will not accept either prayers or praises at your hands. Without the shedding of Christ's blood, there is no remission of sin.

All through this incident, we see that there was no taking heed to the commands of God, and to the rules which he had laid down. The people brought worship to God, instead of that which he had ordained. What do I mean by will-worship? I mean, any kind of worship which is not prescribed in God's own Word. It has sometimes been pleaded, as an excuse for the observance of some rite or ceremony which is not commanded in the Scriptures, that it is very instructive, or very impressive. That is no excuse or justification for disobedience. The first commandment may be broken, not only by worshipping a false god, but by worshipping the true God in another way than that which he has ordained. If you set up a mode of worship not warranted by his Word, whatever you may plead for it, it is idolatrous, and the Lord may well say to you, "Who hath required this at your hands?" Mark this, if it be not of his appointment, neither will it meet with his acceptance. Inasmuch, therefore, as these people did not show any reverence for God by consulting his record of the rules which he had laid down for their guidance, seeming to think that, whatever pleased them must please him, whatever kind of worship they chose to make up would be quite sufficient for the Lord God of Israel therefore, it ended in failure. Beloved, take care how ye worship God. If ye are to take heed how ye hear, ye are also to take heed how ye pray, and to take heed how ye praise, and to take heed how ye come to the communion table. Take heed how, in any way, ye seek to draw near unto the living God, for he is not to be approached in any slipshod fashion that you may choose to invent. He has his own way by which alone he can be approached. His august court has rules, even as the courts of earthly kings have their regulations and-laws; and if ye transgress the King's command, it may be that he will smite you as he slew Uzza, or, at the least, your worship will be unacceptable to him.

II. Now we turn to our second text, to the second head of our discourse, namely, David's Great Fear: "And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the ark of God home to me?"

What changeable creatures we are! From a careless, and almost criminal, want of thought, David's mind speedily travels to great seriousness of thought, attended with a very terrible dread. DO YOU wonder that the death of Uzza callused David to fear greatly? The procession is going along, and the harps, psalteries, timbrels, cymbals, and trumpets are sounding the high praises of God when, on a sudden, the oxen come to the threshing floor of Chidon, and, perhaps, tempted by the sight of the grain, they turn aside, or, at least, they stumble, and the ark is likely to be upset. One mistake usually leads to another. If they had not put the ark on that cart, this trouble would not have happened. And now young Uzza, who had been living in the house where the ark had been kept so long, perhaps not thinking he is doing wrong, puts out his hand to hold the ark, and instantly falls a corpse. A thrill of horror goes

through the crowd, the music stops and David stands aghast. At first sight, it does appear to be a very severe punishment; yet we must remember that this is not the only time that God acted thus toward those who profaned the service in which they were engaged. Nadab and Abihu instead of taking the proper fire to light their censers, took strange fire. There did not seem much difference; is not one kind of fire very much like another? Those two young men went in before the Lord with their censers kindled by strange fire, and they fell dead in a moment before God. They had only broken the law in a small matter, as it seemed; but God has his ways of measuring things, and his method is very different from ours. David ought also to have remembered how more than fifty thousand of the men of Beth-shemesh were slain when the Philistines brought back the ark, and the men of Beth-shemesh looked into it. Truly "our God is a consuming fire." He will not be trifled with. This was his ark, and he would make them know that it was his; and albeit that, with good intentions, they had surrounded it, yet, since they had not reverently obeyed his commands, he would let them see that he was not to be trifled with, nor that his ark could be touched with impunity. Do you wonder that, in the presence of that corpse, David was afraid of God that day?

He was also afraid of God for another reason, namely, that he himself had been in a wrong frame of mind, for we read in the 11th verse, that "David was displeased because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzza." He does not seem to have been displeased with Uzza, but he was displeased with God. It seemed, to him, a hard thing that he had gathered all that crowd of people together, and that they had been doing their best as he thought, for the honor of God, and now the whole proceedings were spoilt by the outstretched hand of an angry God in their midst. So David was angry; and when he remembered that such wicked thoughts had ever crossed his mind, he began to feel afraid of God for his own sake.

Then, I daresay, his own sense of worthlessness for such a holy work made him cry, "How shall I bring the ark of God home to me?" He feared lest, in some unguarded moment, he might be guilty of irreverence, and so perish, as Uzza had done. I have often had, in a measure, that kind of fear upon me which came over David that day. To be a child of God, is the most blessed experience in the world, but it also involves stern discipline. When God makes you his child, You are sure to feel his rod. Others may escape it, but you will not, "for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." If you live very near to God, and you get many tokens of his favor, you will find that you must watch every step you take, and every thought you think, for the Lord is a jealous God; and where he gives the most love, there will be the most jealousy. He may leave a sinner to go to great lengths in sin, but not his saints. He may let ordinary Christians do a great deal without chastening them, but if you are privileged to lie in his bosom, if you have high fellowship with him, you will soon know how jealous he is. I have often heard men, while praying, quote as if it were a text of Scripture, "God, out of Christ, is a consuming fire." The Bible does not say anything of the kind; it says, "Our God is a consuming fire." So, the prophet Isaiah asks, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" And what is his answer? "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly." He is the only man who can live amid such burnings, the sacred salamander from whom the fire only burns out any remaining sin. When you ask to live near to God, see in what a terrible place, and in what a supremely blessed place, you ask to live. You want to live in the fire of his presence, even though you know that it will consume your sin, and that you will have often to suffer much while that sin is being consumed. I have said, again and again, "My Lord, burn as fiercely as it may, I do aspire to dwell in this sacred spot. Let the fire go through me till it has burned up all my dross; but, oh! do let me dwell with thee!"

Yet I am not surprised if someone starts back, and says, "I can hardly ask for such a trial as that." Like James and John we want to sit on the right and left hand of our Master in his glory; but when he asks, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" it will need much more grace than they had if we are able to say, from our hearts "'We can.' By thy grace, we shall be able and willing to endure anything if we may but dwell with thee." For, beloved, if you have ever had even a glimpse of God in his innermost tabernacle, if he has made his glory to shine upon you, you have felt willing even to die, have been almost eager to die, that you might have yet more of that beatific vision, and never have it clouded again. One of the good old saints said, when he had very much of the love of Christ poured into his soul, "Hold, Lord, hold! It is enough. Remember that I am but an earthen vessel. If I have more, I shall die." If I had been in such case I think I would have said, "Do not hold, Lord. I am but an earthen vessel, so I shall die in the process, and glad enough shall I be to die if I may but see thy face, and never, never, lose the vision any more."

We need not wonder that David was afraid after such a manifestation of the divine displeasure. He did the best thing he could do under the circumstances, he left the ark with Obed-edom for a while, determined to set about its removal in a different fashion another time.

III. Now we come to our third subject; that is, David's Sacred Joy: "So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the house of Obed-edom with joy."

Obed-edom took the ark into his house, and God blessed him. Then it occurred to David that there was not much, after all, to be afraid of in the ark. That awful thing, that had smitten Uzza, had been in this other man's house, and been a blessing to him. That

fact has often made my heart rejoice. I have said, "Well, I know that it is a solemn thing to live near to God; but I have seen a poor, bed-ridden woman live in the light of God's countenance, year after year, as happy as all the birds of the air; then, why should not I do the same? I have seen a plain, humble, Christian man walking with God, as Enoch did, and happy from the 1st of January to the last of December, and God blessing him in everything; so, come, my soul, though thy God is a consuming fire, there is nothing for his children to dread." So, after David had seen that God blessed Obed-edom for three months, he thought to himself, "Well, now, Obed-edom has had his turn, and I may have mine. I will set to work to see if I cannot worship God rightly this time, and bring up the ark unto my house in the right way."

So he began thus. He prepared a tent for the ark. I do not read that he did that before; but, in the 1st verse of the 15th chapter we read, "David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent." Now you see that he is thoughtful and careful in preparing a place for the ark of God; and if I want God's presence, I must prepare my mind and heart to receive it. If I want to enjoy communion with my Lord at his table, I must obey that injunction, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." I must not observe the ordinances of the Lord's house without proper thought and solemnity. As the priests washed themselves before they ministered at the altar, so would I come, cleansed and sanctified by the purifying Word, that I may acceptably appear before God.

Then, next, the mind of the Lord was considered. In the 2nd verse of this 15th chapter, David says, "None ought to carry the ark of the Lord but the Levites: for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God;" and he asserts that the breach upon them had been made because they "sought him not after the due order." Now is David anxious to obey God. He will do, not what he thinks proper, but what God thinks proper; and that is the right way for us to worship the Lord. How I wish that all professing Christians would revise their creed by the Word of God! How I wish that all religious denominations would bring their ordinances and forms of worship to the supreme test of the New Testament! "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." But, alas! they know that so much would have to be put away that is now delightful to the flesh, that, I fear me, we shall be long before we bring all to worship God after his own order. But, my soul, if thou art to be accepted of God, thou must see to it that, in all thine approaches to the great King, thou dost strictly observe the etiquette of his court. What is the rule for courtiers who come into the presence of the King of kings? What dress are they to wear? With what words can they approach the throne? In what spirit are they to draw nigh to God? Answer all these questions, and see that thou dost ask the Lord to make thee obedient in all things to his gracious commands.

Further, you see that, this time, the priests were put into their proper places. David said, "Because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order." Now they are where they should have been at the first, in the front of the procession; and, brethren, when God accepts us, Christ will take the first place. Our great High Priest will be in the front, and we shall do nothing except through his name, and in the power of his precious blood.

Then, on this second occasion, sacrifices were presented unto the Lord. Scarcely had the ark rested upon the shoulders of the Levites than they offered seven bullocks and seven rams as a sacrifice unto God. So, we should never think of doing anything in the worship of our God without the seven bullocks and seven rams which are all summed up in the one perfect offering of our ever-adorable Lord. O brothers and sisters, keep Christ ever before you! Let all your good deeds be done through the strength you receive from him, for "of him, and through him, and to him, are all things." Nothing can be right that is apart from him; but if he is our Alpha and Omega, and all the letters between, there is no fear that we shall not bring up the ark of the Lord aright. In this spirit of loving obedience, and holy awe, relying upon the sacrifice which they had presented, they seemed like hinds let loose; and David, especially, who I suppose was a representative of the whole of them, seemed as if he did not know how he could adequately express the joy that he felt. He had his harp, of which he was a master-player; so, with his skillful fingers moving among the familiar strings, he began to sing; and as he sang, he leaped like some of our Methodist friends do when they get so excited that they must needs begin to jump and to dance. I suppose that all the crowd cried, "Amen!" as David sang some of his most joyous songs of praise unto the Lord, and that a great shout went up to heaven, for everyone was glad that day, and especially David, as he danced before the Lord with all his might.

We must not forget that this carrying up of the ark was a type of the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. If there is anything that should make a Christian's heart leap for joy, it is the fact of his Lord's return to heaven. See him! He has risen from the dead, and now he is rising from the midst of his disciples. He continues to ascend till a cloud receives him out of their sight, and angels fly to meet him as he nears the pearly gates. Squadron after squadron salutes the conquering Prince, and bids him welcome home. And who, I pray you, is this Lord of hosts who now ascends his Father's throne, and sits down at his Father's right hand for ever, as the acknowledged King of kings and Lord of lords? It is the man that died on Calvary, the great representative Man who is also God. Lo, at his chariot wheels he drags sin, Satan, death, and hell. He leadeth captivity captive, and giveth gifts unto men.

**"Sing, O heavens! O earth, rejoice!
Angel harp, and human voice,
Round him, as he rises, raise**

Now may ye, who love him, dance with all your might; now may ye let your souls revel in intensest delight, and plunge themselves in the bottomless sea of ineffable bliss. God grant you so to do, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

1 Chronicles 13:8, 12

The Lesson of Uzza

Sermon Notes

And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets." (12) And David was afraid of God that day, saying, how shall I bring the ark of God home to me? (15:25) So David and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the house of Obed-edom with joy. — 1 Chronicles 13:8, 12, 15:25

David loved his God and venerated the symbol of his presence. He desired to restore the Lord's appointed worship, and to place the ark where it should be, as the most sacred center of worship. But right things must be done in a right manner, or they will fail. In this case the failure was sad and signal, for Uzza died, and the ark turned aside to the house of Obed-edom.

I. THE FAILURE. First Text: 1 Chron. 13:8.

Here were multitudes, "David and all Israel," and yet the business came to naught. Crowds do not ensure blessing.

Here was pomp — singing, harps, trumpets, etc. — yet it ended in mourning. Gorgeous ceremonial is no guarantee of grace.

Here was energy: "they played before God with all their might." This was no dull and sleepy worship, but a bright, lively service, and yet the matter fell through.

But there was no thought as to God's mind. David confessed, "we sought him not after the due order" (1 Chron. 15:13).

There was very little spiritual feeling! More music than grace.

The priests were not in their places, nor the Levites to carry the ark: oxen took the place of willing men. The worship was not sufficiently spiritual and humble.

There was no sacrifice. This was a fatal flaw; for how can we serve the Lord apart from sacrifice?

There was little reverence. We hear little of prayer, but we hear much of oxen, a cart, and the too familiar hand of Uzza.

Now, even a David must keep his place, and the Lord's command must not be supplanted by will-worship. Therefore the Lord made a breach upon Uzza, and David was greatly afraid.

May we not expect similar failures unless we are careful to act obediently, and serve the Lord with holy awe? Are all the observances and practices of our churches scriptural? Are not some of them purely will-worship?

II. THE FEAR. Second Text: 1 Chron. 13:12.

The terrible death of Uzza caused great fear. Thus the Lord slew Nadab and Abihu for offering strange fire; and the men of Beth-shemesh for looking into the ark. The Lord has said, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified" (Lev. 10:3).

His own sense of wrong feeling caused this fear in David, for we read, "and David was displeased" (verse 11). We are too apt to be displeased with God because he is displeased with us.

His own sense of unworthiness for such holy work made him cry, "How shall I bring the ark of God home to me?"

His feeling that he failed in that which God expected of his servants created a holy fear. "Sanctify yourselves, that ye may bring up the ark of the Lord God" (1 Chron. 15:12).

He meant well, but he had erred, and so he came to a pause; yet not for long. The ark of God remained with Obed-edom three months, but not more (verse 14).

Some make the holiness of God and the strictness of his rule an excuse for wicked neglect.

Others are overwhelmed with holy fear; and therefore pause a while, till they are better prepared for the holy service.

III. THE JOY. Third Text: 1 Chron. 15:25.

1. God blessed Obed-edom. Thus, may humble souls dwell with God and die not. Those houses which entertain the ark of the Lord shall be well rewarded.
2. Preparation was made and thought exercised by David and his people when a second time they set about moving the ark of the covenant. Read the whole of the chapter.
3. The mind of the Lord was considered: "And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders, with the staves thereof, as Moses commanded, according to the word of the Lord" (verse 15).
4. The priests were in their places: "So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves." Men and methods must both be ruled by God (verse 14).
5. Sacrifices were offered: "And it came to pass, when God helped, the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams" (verse 26). The great and perfect sacrifice must ever be to the front.
6. Now came the exceeding joy (verse 28).

Do we draw near to God in all holy exercises after this careful, spiritual, reverent fashion?

If so, we may safely exhibit our delight, and our hearts may dance before the Lord as king David did (verse 29).

For Emphasis

When after long disuse ordinances come to be revived, it is too common for even wise and good men to make some mistakes. Who would have thought that David should have made such a blunder as this, to carry the ark upon a cart (verse 7)? Because the Philistines so carried it, and a special providence drove the cart (1 Sam. 6:12), he thought they might do so too. But we must walk by rule, not by example, when it varies from the rule; no, not those examples that providence has owned. — Matthew Henry

1. The matter and right manner of performing duties are, in the command of God, linked together. He will have his service well done as well as really done. We must serve God with a perfect heart and a willing mind, for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. Masters on earth challenge to themselves a power to oblige their servants, not only to do their work, but to do it so-and-so; and though they do the thing itself, yet if not in the manner required, it cannot be accepted.
2. The doing of a duty in a wrong manner alters the nature of it, and makes it sin. Hence "the ploughing of the wicked is sin" (Prov. 21:4). Hence prayer is accounted a howling upon their beds (Hos. 7:14). Unworthy communicating is not counted as eating the Lord's supper (1 Cor. 11:20). If a house be built of never so strong timber and good stones, yet if it be not well founded, and rightly built, the inhabitant may curse the day he came under the roof of it.
3. Duties not performed according to the right order are but the half of the service we owe to God, and the worst half too. — Thomas Boston

1 Chronicles 16:9: Good Talk

NO. 3399

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“Talk ye of all his wondrous works.” — 1 Chronicles 16:9.

This sentence stands in connection with exhortations to offer thanksgiving unto the Lord, and to make known his deeds among the people. Thus it runs, “Sing unto him; sing Psalms unto him; talk ye of all his wondrous works.”

The old typical religion of the Jews, and the perverse superstition of the heathen, made some places sacred and some places unclean, some actions holy, and other actions, performed however well they might be, common, and not to be connected in any degree with holiness. But the religion of Jesus Christ has once for all swept away all holy places, and every place is hallowed wherever man is holy. Jesus Christ has consecrated the world by his presence, and wherever man chooses to worship, there is a house for God. The religion of Jesus Christ has also swept away those distinctions which men make as to actions being necessarily religious or irreligious. Some will have it that to sing a psalm is to worship God — a sacred thing; but to feed the sparrows is, according to them, a secular matter. To come up to a place that shall be set apart for worship, and there to bow the knee in prayer, is adoration of the Most High, but, according to them, to perform acts of mercy and righteousness is not a tribute of homage to God. Now, the very essence of the Christian religion is just this — that it is not a thing confined to hours and times, and places, but it is a thing of spirit. It lieth not in outward garbs or in mere words, but pervades the whole spirit of man, and makes him turn his entire life into worship, then every action he performs in its spirit and under its influence is holiness unto the Lord. God is worshipped by servants who fulfill the duties of their station, by judges who decree righteousness, by merchants who deal justly, by children who obey their parents, and by parents who train up their children in the fear of the Lord. There is not a line to be drawn anywhere, so that you can say, “Outside of that you go beyond the sanctuary of religion, and get into the outer courts frequented by the multitude.” Here has been the great mistake which some Christians have made with regard to politics. They have supposed that a man could not be a Christian and a politician too. Hence much injustice has been done. The fact is, when a man feels “There is nothing belongs to man but what may be consecrated to God,” and when he says, “I, being God’s servant, may take all that belongs to man, and devote it as holiness unto the Lord,” he reaches the highest order of manhood, and illustrates the highest style of Christianity. We cannot fully exhibit the spirit of Jesus Christ till we have learned that we must carry out in every place, and in every sphere, the spirit of his religion.

I make these remarks because, while we are first bidden to sing unto God’s praise, we are next told to talk about his wondrous works. There is a praising for the assembly; there is a talking for the fireside; and both are to be holy. The praise is to be hearty, sincere, unanimous, full of animation; the talk is to be equally sincere, equally earnest, equally sacred. You are not to say, “I have done with praising God,” when the hymn is over, and you begin to open your mouths upon ordinary topics; but in your ordinary conversation, in the fields, by the way-side, in the streets, and in your chambers, you are still to go on praising God, and talking of all his wondrous works.

Shall there be a connection established between such a common word as “talk” and such grand swelling words as “the wondrous works of God”? We wonder to find the little monosyllable in such a place. “Preach ye of all his wondrous works,” would seem well enough; “Show them,” would seem sound theology; but talk ye, talk ye; in your ordinary, common, every-day conversation; make the wondrous works of God to be your trite converse, your familiar talk. We must talk; we seem born to talk; we were wretched indeed if we were forbidden to speak to our fellow-creatures. Why, the world seems to be enlivened by continuous, not to say incessant, talking, from the first blush of morning, on still through all the bustling day, and far into the shades of drowsy night. How our tongues are occupied! They run more quickly than our feet, and carry less, though much mischief sometimes comes from their babble. They are sharper than razors, some of them, and cut deeper than swords, and kindle fire enough to set the world in a blaze. Now, this talking to which women are proverbially disposed, and in which men indulge as freely as inclination prompts them; to be heard in every street, in every house, and in every workshop; this it is which is to be consecrated unto God. The streams of conversation are everywhere to be drawn off from the gutters and channels in which they gather defilement; to be strained, cleansed, and purified, till they become fresh, clear, and sparkling. Then the speech of human intercourse, man with man, saint with saint, redeemed from the beggarly elements of common slander and envy, foolishness and vanity, shall be lifted up as on eagles’ wings till it is like the fellowship of the angels realising the prediction of the psalmist, to the praise of the Lord, “They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom and talk of thy power.” Now, first: —

I. The Subject Here Suggested For Our Common-Place Talk — His Wondrous Works — invites notice.

Brethren, we ought to talk more about God’s wondrous works as we find them in Holy Scripture. Do you read them? Alas! in how many a case the Bible is the least read book in the house! I am inclined to think that, although there may be more Bibles in England than any other book, there is less of Bible-reading than anything else in literature. The sacred volume seems to be scarcely known to many, except from chapters read in the public services, and the quotations of the minister, while alas, alas, for us! our conversation hath very little in it of the records of the mighty acts of the Lord. But the old saints were wont to speak to one another about the historical parts of Scripture. They dwelt full often, and never seemed happier than when they were dwelling, upon it, on that story of

the Red Sea, when the Lord smote Rahab, and brake the head of the dragon. How they would stand together and speak of the books of the wars of the lord, of what he did by the brook Arnon, and how he led his servants through Jordan, and brought them into the promised land, cast out the Canaanites, and slew their kings. They talked of these things, not merely as historical events, but as seeing the Lord in them all, and they so spoke and so read of them as to see in them subjects worthy of their study. I do not know how it is, but we do not get at the history of our own country in anything like the way in which one might desire, for really the wondrous works of God which he has done here in this land are such as we ought to speak of at our firesides. We should look upon the events of history and the chronicles of each day in this light, and if, as we scanned the ample page of history, rich with the spoils of time, we saw God's hand fashioning its contingencies and moulding them into destiny, and the impress of his footsteps upon all its stupendous revolutions, we should not lack for topics of conversation, but our memories would be stored, our interest excited, our minds elevated with noble passions, and our social intercourse ennobled by the inexhaustible resources of wisdom, as we talked of all the wondrous works of the Lord.

But, brethren, our own history will enable us to relate such a multitude of tender mercies as may well become incentives to gratitude and praise. How much might we tell of what the Lord has done for us personally! Here is a subject that shall never be exhausted. Talk to one another — especially to those who can understand you because they have felt the same — of the long-suffering of God when you were in your ungodly estate; the wonders of that love which tracked you with its many warnings while you were still strangers to yourselves and to God. Talk of that Almighty power which, when the predestinated hour had come, laid hold upon you and made you yield. Speak of what the Lord did for you when you were in the low dungeon of your own self-abhorrence; how he met with you when you were brought to death's door; how Jesus appeared for you, and clothed you with his righteousness, and your spirit revived, and your heart was glad. Shall the slave ever forget the music of his chains when they dropped from his wrists, and will you ever cease to speak of that happy day, the happiest of all days, when all the chains of your transgression were for ever broken off at the love touch of your Redeemer? Oh, no! talk ye still of the wondrous works of God as connected with your conversion. And, since that time, however quiet your life may have been, I am sure there has been much in it that has tenderly illustrated the Lord's providence, the Lord's guidance, the Lord's deliverance, the Lord's upholding and sustaining you. You have been, perhaps, in poverty, and just when the barrel of meal was empty, then you were supplied. Talk ye of his wondrous works. You have been in great temptation, and when you were reeling under it, or when you were slandered and no name was thought bad enough for you, his sweet love hath appeared to you, and helped you to rejoice in this also for Christ's name sake. Talk ye of this. You have gone, perhaps, Christian, through fire and through water; yours has been a very chequered life; you have fought with lions, or have stood in the valley of the shadow of death, but in it all God's aid has been very wonderful. There have been miracles heaped upon miracles along your pathway. Perhaps you are like the Welsh woman who said that the Ebenezers which she had set up at the places where God had helped her were so thick that they made a wall from the very spot she began with Christ to that she had then reached. Is it so with you? Then talk ye, talk ye of all his wondrous works. I am sure you would find such talk most interesting, most impressive, and most instructive, for the things we have seen and experienced ourselves generally wear a novelty, and abound in interest, beyond any narrative we get from books, or any unauthenticated story we pick up at secondhand. Tell them how God has led you, fed you, and brought you to this day, and would not let you go.

There is a topic for you, and you never shall know how large it is.

II. The Excellency Of This Subject Is Both Negative And Positive.

Were we to talk more of God's wondrous works, there would be this negative good, that we should talk less about our own works. A man never lowers himself more than when he tries to lift himself up. There are some whose propensity is to use vain swelling words about their own doings, and they seem to be never better pleased than when they are bragging and saying, "I did this; I did that; I did the other." "Talk ye of all his wondrous works." As for your puny actions, if you judge and estimate them properly, you will find more to mourn over than to boast of. Give to the Lord the glory that is due unto his name, and your discretion shall not be perilled.

If we talked more of God's wondrous works, we should be free from talking of other people's works. It is easy to criticise those we could not rival, and carp at those we could not emulate. He who could not carve a statue, or make a single stroke of the chisel correctly, affects to point out where the handicraft of the greatest sculptor might have been improved. It is a poor, pitiful occupation, that of picking holes in other people's coats, and yet some people seem so pleased when they can perceive a fault, that they roll it under their tongue as a sweet morsel. Why should this be? Why should you find fault with God's servants in this way? They are not your servants, but his servants; he will call them to account himself. He does not ask you to be thus officious. Talk ye of his wondrous works, and you will not speak so unkindly of his servants.

Did we talk more of God's wondrous works, it would keep us from the ordinary frivolities of conversation. In the olden times they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. Suppose for a moment that our ordinary conversation were taken

down by an eaves-dropper, as in the case mentioned by Malachi. I do not know what your conversation was about at tea-time this evening but supposing that somebody had been hearkening and hearing, and that you knew for certain that it was going to be put into a book and printed, would you feel quite easy? Supposing we could have put down in a book the talk of all our people during the day, and could have it all read out, I am afraid we should find that our talk is not always such as edifieth, and not always seasoned with salt. In fact, some Christian people never talk thoroughly good gospel talk unless somebody is present in whose esteem it is likely to raise them, or until they get into such company as they suppose will relish it, and then they feel compelled to accommodate themselves to the occasion. The habit of thoroughly good godly talk is not common among professors. I wish it were. I wish that not only sometimes our talk were what God would have it to be, but that it were always so, that our common conversation were like salt ministering grace unto the hearers.

As there is a negative excellence about this subject of conversation, so there is also a positive excellence. Supposing we were to talk more of God's wondrous works; when the habit was acquired, it would necessitate stricter habits of observation, and of discrimination in watching the providence of God. Memory, the treasure-house of the mind, must have its goods assorted and its records indexed, so that the things of which we hear and read might not only be well retained, but easily referred to. As Cowper says: —

**“But conversation, choose what theme we may,
And chiefly when religion leads the way,
Should flow, like waters after summer showers,
Not as if raised by mere mechanic powers.”**

Alas! the mercies of God flow by us like a river; we forget to count its multitudinous waves. We receive the mercies fresh every day, and take but slight account of them; too often they are: —

**“Forgotten in unthankfulness,
And without mention die.”**

The spirit of observing God in all things was prevalent amongst our Puritan ancestors. They saw God in every single drop of rain, and in every ray of sunlight. They were wont to talk about the commonest changes of the atmosphere as coming from the hand of God, to speak of incidents which we might account trivial as connected with the decrees of him who ordereth all things after the counsel of his own will. Oh! that we, too, amidst the various maze of life, could thus learn to track the course “of boundless wisdom and of boundless love”! Such conversation, brethren would be very ennobling. Why, it would liken us to the ancient saints and the spirits before the throne. What is their conversation there? How they talk of God's wondrous works, God's works in creation, God's works in providence, God's works in grace. They are too taken up with the splendor of the divine presence to suffer their pure intercourse to degenerate into any meaner theme. Yes, and living as we do in the presence of God, professing to have the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, and to have been lifted up from the world into communion with Jesus Christ, it ought to be our holy ambition to let our conversation be of things that are like our standing, things that are worthy of our high calling and profession, things that have to do with our election, and will help us onward to our eternal portion. We should not be so grovelling as we are, did we talk more of the wondrous things of God.

And beloved, while holding this lofty fellowship of heart and tongue, how would our gratitude glow and what an impulse would be given to our entire life! I do not know how you find it, but with me it is no easy matter to maintain spiritual life in the fullness of its vigor. To go week after week, month after month, and year after year, plodding on in the pilgrimage, is hard work; it needs no small degree of strength, resolve and skill. If it were one tremendous leap, we could soon perform it; if it were but a spurt in the race, we might soon win the prize; but to go on, on, on, and still to keep up our zeal, still to be awake, still to be earnest, here it is one feels the need of the mercies of God to be means of grace to us, to refresh our gratitude, and put fresh fuel upon the altar. Oh! brethren, we have not lived yet. We do not seem to recognize what the Christian life really means. When I instanced our conversation just now as being poor, and mean, and barren, I did but cull one mildewed leaf out of the whole field, for our whole life is much alike, I fear. The Lord revive us. What means is he so likely to use, except he employ the rod of chastisement, as the renewal of our memory of his great loving-kindness, that we may be constrained to dedicate ourselves more fully unto him? But times flies; let me proceed, therefore: —

III. To Urge This Talking, Ordinarily And Commonly, About God's Wondrous Works.

I have already said that it would prevent much evil and do us much good. May I not safely add that it would be the means of doing much good to others? If we spake often of God's wondrous works, we might impress the sinner, we might enlighten the ignorant, we might comfort the desponding. You say, “But how are we to do it?” I reply, “How is it you have not done it before?” If we began early in our Christian course to make Jesus Christ our companion in the family and everywhere wherever we went, and to take him always

with us, we should never leave off; it would become the business of our life. I have noticed that many Christian people delay in this matter for years. They cultivate habits of retirement and reticence more upon this subject than upon any other. Perhaps it is a long time after they have believed that they come forward to obey the second great command of baptism, and the same shyness happens with regard to their talking about Christ in all companies. They do love him; at least, in the judgment of charity, we trust they do; we acknowledge them, but having never began at the first to acknowledge him openly, they cannot break the ice now. If they had then had the courage to say, "I have given Christ my tongue, and mean to use it for him; I am his servant, and I mean to serve him wherever I go," they would have continued the profession and the practice still. Brethren, is it diffidence that restrains you? Take care it is diffidence, and not cowardice; say to yourselves, each one of you: —

**"Am I a soldier of the Cross,
A follower of the Lamb?
And shall I fear to own his cause,
Or blush to speak his name?"**

What, in the presence of the noble army of martyrs who feared not to die, do you fear to speak? What, if they stood on the burning faggots for Christ, cannot you bear, if so it must be, a jeer or a sarcasm? Must you be wickedly dumb when you might do so much for Christ in the circle where his providence has cast you? Oh! be ashamed of having been ashamed. Do ask the Master that, whatever fear you have, you may be delivered from the fear of man, which bringeth a snare. "Talk ye of all his wondrous works."

But some will object, "I have not gifts or ability." Nay, my brother; my sister; it does not want any ability to talk, or else there would not be so much loquacity in the world as there is. Talk in the ordinary strain, the common-place prattle, which breaks the silence of the world. It is what everybody is at. There is no gifted tongue requisite, there are no powers of eloquence invoked; neither laws of rhetoric nor rules of grammar are pronounced indispensable in the simple talk that my text inculcates, "Talk ye of all his wondrous works." I beg your pardon when you say you cannot do this. You cannot because you will not. If you would, you could speak well of his name. Because there is no want of ability in any one of us to say something for Jesus after an ordinary sort, I press it upon you.

Are you a nursemaid? Talk of his name to the little prattlers with whom you are entrusted. Or are you a crossing-sweeper? Friend, there are some you can get at that I could not. I will be bound to say the crossing-sweeper has a friend who would be frightened if I were to speak to him. "But I am so poor," you reply; "I work in the midst of such a ribald, blaspheming set." Ah! friend, but you can talk; I know you can; there are times when you can talk even to these blasphemers. It is little use talking to a drunken man: it is like casting pearls before swine. But he is not always drunk; there is a time of sobriety, and then it is that you are to go to work. You are not so to talk of Christ as to stop the mill, or to interpose your religion in the way of business. That were indiscreet; but there are leisure times, there are hours for dinner, there, are times when they talk to you, and then is your time to talk to them. As the profane take the liberty to force their irreligion upon you, so you take the liberty to force your religion upon them. Use your wits, find out the proper times, and then turn them to the best account. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not which shall prosper, this or that."

I have only one aim to-night; if I can succeed in it, I shall be very thankful — that Christian people shall talk more of the love of God at the table, at the breakfast table, at the tea table, at the dinner table; that domestic companionship and social hospitalities may be hallowed, and this without depriving them of their genial conviviality; rather infusing into them a higher entertainment; that we who are masters shall talk of the things of God, so that our servants shall hear of them, and that servants shall so speak of Christ that their fellows shall hear about him. The great weapon of the Christian religion has been the public preaching of the Word, nor would I disparage it, but it will never evangelise the nations unless there be attendant with it a constant reiteration of the truth preached, till it flow through innumerable little conduits into every circle of society. Wycliffe was but one man, but he taught others to read. One page of Matthew's gospel and the Epistle to the Romans was given to each. They went out and read it in the streets. So was the truth spread until it was said that you could not meet two men on the roadside, but one of them would be a Lollard. In Luther's day it was not merely the preaching of Luther, it was the singing of the hymns and the psalms at the spinning-wheel; it was the occupation of the solitary colporteur; it was the general chit-chatting with everybody, at the smithy fire, in the farmyard, on the Exchange; curiosity was excited, enquiry was prompted, the popular conversation was inoculated; the clever of that healthful sickness — repentance toward God was spread abroad, and communicated from one to another. Have you heard the news? Have you heard that Luther has proclaimed that men are justified by faith, and not by works?" It was this that shook Rome; it is this which will shake her yet again. The waking up of Christian life throughout the entire body of the Church of God, and the enlisting of the entire life of the Christian Church in the cause of Christ is an enterprise to be consummated by the individual agency of each, and the general action of all who seek the glory of God and the welfare of man. Talk ye, therefore, of all his wondrous works.

Oh! that there should be any here who never thought of God, much less talked of his wondrous works. Wondrous, indeed, is God's patience that has kept you alive! Marvellous his long-suffering that, after having neglected him all these years, he has not cut you down! The ox knoweth its owner, and the ass its master's crib, but you have not known God. You would not keep a dog that would not follow you. You would soon dispose of an ox that was of no service to you. Oh! why has God kept you? It is a wonder. Here is

another wonder: he bids us entreat you allure you, encourage you with a saving promise, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” Take heed to this gospel. May the Holy Ghost make you yield to it. Trust Christ; obey him by avowing your faith in him, and you shall be saved.

The Lord grant it, for Jesus, sake. Amen.

1 Chronicles 13

Exposition by C H Spurgeon

1 Chronicles 13:1-3.

It had lain neglected at Birjath-jearim, “in the fields of the wood,” as David writes in the 132nd Psalm.

1 Chronicles 13:4-5.

A stately array of all the leaders of the tribes, with all sorts of music, to do honor to the ark of God.

1 Chronicles 13:9, 10.

I suppose that Uzza, through the ark having been so long in his father’s house, had grown unduly familiar with it, and therefore touched it. Yet it was an express law that even the Levites should not lay a hand upon the ark. They carried it with staves; the priests alone might touch it for necessary purposes. It was for this profanation that Uzza “died before God.”

1 Chronicles 13:11, 12.

He was afraid lest he also might die.

1 Chronicles 13:13.

He must have been a brave, believing man, to be willing to receive the terrible ark into his house; but he probably knew that, so long as he behaved reverentially to it, he would have a blessing, and not a curse, through taking it under his charge.

1 Chronicles 15

1 Chronicles 15:1; 2. And David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent. Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God; and to minister unto him forever.

It should not be carried upon a new cart, dragged by unwilling oxen but it should be borne upon the cheerful shoulders of the God-appointed bearers, the Levites.

3, 4. And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the LORD unto his place, which he had prepared for it. And David assembled the children of Aaron, and the Levites:

Then follows the list of them, which we need not now read.

11-13. And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, and Joel, Shemaiah, and Eliet, and Amminadab, and said unto them, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it. For because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.

They had sought him, but they had not done it “after the due order.” They had been in too great a hurry; and they had followed their own notions, instead of looking to the written law wherein everything was prescribed for them.

14-16. So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel. And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the LORD. And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of musick, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy.

Before, there had been a great medley of musical instruments, but little singing, and there had not been a proper choice as to the persons who were to sing; but, now, this service was put into the right hands.

Then follows a list of the singers and the players upon the various kinds of instruments that went forth to bear the ark. Let us pass on to the 20th verse.

25, 26. So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the house of Obed-edom with joy. And it came to pass, when God helped the Levites. —

For, though the ark was by no means a great load, yet they must have felt some measure of alarm at the very idea of going near to it; but when God strengthened them, they took up their burden with delight: “When God helped the Levites” —

26. That bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams.

There is no mention of any sacrifice on the precious occasion. If there had been a proper offering of beasts unto the Lord, there might not have been the death of Uzza; but, now, they do everything in the right order, and the sacrificial blood is sprinkled; without that, there is no acceptance before God.

27, 28. And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bare the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song with the singers: David also had upon him an ephod of linen. Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the cornet and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps.

David himself, while playing on his harp, leaping and dancing through the intensity of joy which filled his soul.

29. And it came to pass, as the ark of the covenant of the Lord came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looking out at a window saw king David dancing and playing: and she despised him in her heart.

So have I known it, when a rich person has been converted, and has been found, in the first hush of his Christian joy, mixing with the poorest of the brethren full of delight, and somebody of his own rank has sneered at him. Yet Michal was less honorable than David, though she thought so much of herself. God forbid that we should ever blush to manifest enthusiasm even with the poorest of God’s saints while we are glorifying the Lord! Let Michal sneer, if she will, it matters little what she does. We will only reply as David did, “I will yet be more vile than thus.”

1 Chronicles 21

Exposition by C H Spurgeon

1 Chronicles 21:1

Israel had greatly offended and grieved God, and it was to be punished. God punished one sin by another: the sin of David works for the chastisement of a sinful people.

1 Chronicles 21:2

He had got proud, he had begun to depend upon the number of his people. In truth, it was a large population under his sway, five millions or more, and he, that had been a shepherd lad, that in his early youth had trusted in his God, now thinking himself a great man, somewhat in the spirit of Nebuchadnezzar, begins to say, “Behold, this great kingdom that I have gathered and founded.”

1 Chronicles 21:3

It adds greatly to a wrong action if we are checked in it, and especially if we are checked in it by a man who has not any conscience to spare, but yet, notwithstanding his roughness, such as Joab had, nevertheless expostulates with you, “why do this?” The people generally understood that, when they were numbered, it was with a view to taxing them, it was with a view of showing David’s sovereignty over them. Now David was not their sovereign, the Lord God was their King; David was but the Viceroy, and when he began to count them as though they were his own, it was a source of great indignation to the most High. I am afraid when you and I begin to count up as we have done, begin to reckon upon how much we have given, or how much we have effected for God, we begin to appropriate a measure of glory to ourselves. We had better leave that alone, for although pride may not seem a great sin in the eye of men, it is assuredly that which bringeth the utmost wrath from the most High. He cannot endure pride, especially in those whom He has lifted up. He took David from the sheepfold, and if David has now become great, David must be brought down again.

1 Chronicles 21:4-6

So he did no more of it than he could possibly help.

1 Chronicles 21:7,8

We read that David's heart smote him. Although he had gone wrong, he was nevertheless a good man, and when an ambitious man sins it is a great sin, but it is not long that he continues in it: his conscience is awakened; the Spirit of God is in him. David's heart smote him. That is a terrible blow when your own heart smites you; if you never feel any other person smiting you, you will feel that.

1 Chronicles 21:7-15

See the power of the mercy of God; even when the angel has drawn his sword, and is already executing the Lord's just judgments, God's mercy interposes, and holds back the blade of death. Should we not love the Lord for his great longsuffering toward us? "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."

1 Chronicles 21:9-11

David was to choose where there was no choice, for everything proposed to him seemed to be equally bitter.

1 Chronicles 21:12,13

It shows how he was broken down. David's proud heart was humbled, he was entirely submissive to the will of God, he wished to fall into the hands of the Lord.

1 Chronicles 21:13,14

It is a very beautiful word, -the Lord looked steadfastly on what was being done.

1 Chronicles 21:15, 16

This was the very best clothing and the very best posture for men who were under the chastising hand of God; they had put on sackcloth, and they had fallen upon their faces. O guilty sinner, if God's sword of vengeance is drawn against you, you cannot do better than put sackcloth upon your soul, if not upon your body, and prostrate yourself before the Most High.

1 Chronicles 21:16,17

Here the great heart of the man who had sinned comes out again: he is no tyrant after all, he is a worthy man to be the Viceroy of the Most High. He has the same spirit that Moses had, when he cried, "If not, blot my name out of the Book of Life." He offers himself, not the innocent for the guilty, but, indeed, the guilty for the guilty; as far as he can, he will bear the consequences of his sin.

1 Chronicles 21:17

Here we see David at his best; and what a true patriot he is! He interposes himself, willing rather that he should be destroyed than that the people should die. This was the spirit of Moses when he said to the Lord, "If thou wilt forgive their sin — — ; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." And this was the spirit of Paul, when he wrote, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." There are times when our great love for others will overflow all bounds of moderation, when we shall say, and say from our hearts, what we should not have dared to utter in cooler moments.

1 Chronicles 21:18-20

He was busy at his threshing, and he saw the angel standing by his own threshingfloor.

1 Chronicles 21:20

There are great caverns hard by the spot, and, no doubt, they ran into one of them.

1 Chronicles 21:20-23

And as we are told in the other narrative, as a king giveth to a king, so did Araunah unto David. Probably he had been a king, and David had dispossessed him in his conquest of Jebus, but now he proves that he had a royal heart, and he offers to give all to King David.

1 Chronicles 21:18-27

See what was done by David's intercession and sacrifice; and remember that there is a greater David who, with a richer sacrifice and mightier intercession, sheathes the sword of God, so that his people are spared.

1 Chronicles 21:24,25

Not paid there and then, for he did not carry that amount with him, but fifty shekels of silver were paid that moment to bind their bargain, according to the narrative in the 2nd Book of Samuel.

1 Chronicles 21:25-28

David was commanded to go to Ornan, or Araunah, the Jebusite, to rear an altar unto the Lord in his threshingfloor. There had been a terrible plague in Jerusalem, in consequence of David's great sin in numbering the people; and they were falling in thousands by the sword of the angel of vengeance. David went up to the threshingfloor or Ornan on Mount Moriah. Ornan was willing to give it to him, but he determined to buy it. We read in the twenty-fifth verse; —

There was the place for the temple, where the angel sheathed his sword. Christ Jesus, in his great atonement, is the corner-stone of the temple where divine justice sheathes its sword. There let the house of God be built. Every true Church of God is founded on the glorious doctrine of the atoning sacrifice. It was a threshingfloor, too; and God has built his Church on a threshingfloor. Depend upon it, the flail will always be going in every true Church, to fetch out the wheat from the chaff. We must have tribulation if we are in the Church of God. The threshingfloor will always be needed until we are taken up to the heavenly garner above.

1 Chronicles 21:26,27

That God had already done in his own intent and purpose, now he does it actually, just as before Jesus Christ, our great sacrifice, was offered. God, in the eternal purpose, had stayed the sword of vengeance from his redeemed people, and then actually did it when Christ their sacrifice was presented.

1 Chronicles 22 Exposition by C H Spurgeon

1 Chronicles 22:1

Now he knew where the temple was to be built; and of a certainty he had discovered that long-predestined site of which God said, "Here will I dwell." This was the very hill whereon Abraham offered up his son Isaac; a hill, therefore, most sacred by covenant to the living God. He delighted to remember the believing obedience of his servant Abraham, and there he would have his temple built.

From that moment, this place was set apart as the site of the future temple, and the center of the hopes of the people of God, and, dear friend) went better site could have been selected than the spot where the angel sheathed his sword, where prayer was heard, and where sacrifice was accepted? And now, to-day, you and I have only one temple, and that temple is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Well-beloved, for in him the sword is sheathed, in him the sacrifice if accepted, and in him intercession still prevails.

1 Chronicles 22:2.

Observe here a very gracious eye to us who are Gentiles. The temple was built on the threshingfloor of a Jebusite; Ornan was not of the seed of Israel, but one of the accursed Jebusites. It was his land that must be bought for the temple; and now David would employ the strangers who lived in the midst of Israel, but were not of the chosen race, to quarry the stones for the house of God. There was a place for Gentiles in the heart of God, and they had a share in the building of his temple.

See, a great deliverance brings a great offering. Because God has bidden the angel sheath his sword, there is to be a temple commenced, and David is busy preparing for it. O you who have been saved from death and hell, what can you render unto God for all his benefits toward you?

1 Chronicles 22:3, 4.

Here are the Gentiles again, the Zidonians and the men of Tyre; those that went down to the sea in ships, that had no part nor lot with Israel. There were to bring the cedar wood to David. What an opening of doors of hope there was for poor castaway Gentiles in that fact!

1 Chronicles 22:5.

This was beautiful and thoughtful on David's part. It might be too great a strain upon the young man to collect the materials for the temple as well as to build it; therefore David will take his part, and prepare the materials for the house of the Lord. If we cannot do one thing, let us do another; but, somehow, let us help in the building of the Church of God. The Church to-day seems but a poor thing; but it is to be "exceeding magnifical." The glory of the world is to be the Church of God; and the glory of the Church of God is the Christ of God. Let us do as much as we can to build a spiritual house for our Lord's indwelling.

If he might not build the temple, he would at least gather the materials for it. So, let us try to do all we can in the cause of God. There is said to have been a king, who felt so grateful to God for some special favor, that he determined to build a great temple, and pay for it all himself; no one was to help at all in it. One night, in his dreams, he was told that the honor of building that temple would not belong to him as he desired, and he thought within himself, "To whom then can it be, for I have not allowed any person to work for me without full wage, and I have done it all?" At last, he discovered that there was a poor woman in his kingdom, who also loved his God, and not daring to help in the temple building, she had brought little handfuls of hay to give to the horse that had dragged the stones, so hers was to be the greater honor. If you may not do all you would, do all you can; for God will accept it of you if it be rendered by a willing mind and a loving heart.

1 Chronicles 22:5-7.

And it was well that it was in his mind. God often takes the will for the deed. If you have a large-hearted purpose in your mind, cherish it, and do your best to carry it out: but if for some reason you should never be permitted to carry out your own ideal, it shall be equally acceptable to God, for it was in your heart.

1 Chronicles 22:8.

In very much of that fighting David had been faultless; for he fought the battles of the people of God. Still, there are some things that men are called to do, for which they are not to be condemned; but they disqualify them for higher work. It was so in David's case; he had been a soldier, and he might help to build the temple by collecting the materials for it, but he must not build it.

Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; God's Church is to be a place of rest. God's temple was built by "a man of rest."

1 Chronicles 22:9.

Then the house of the Lord would be built; no stain of blood would be upon it. The only blood therein should be that of holy sacrifices, symbolical of the great Sacrifice of Christ.

1 Chronicles 22:9-14

At the very lowest calculation, David had laid up eighteen millions of money for the building of this house for the Lord. It was an enormous sum, and he must have been long in saving it, yet he gives Solomon leave to increase it: "Thou mayest add thereto." I like that way of putting the matter; and when some of you see good help rendered to the cause of God by others who are able to do more than you can, do not therefore say, "I need not give anything," but remember what David said to Solomon, "Thou mayest add thereto." There is room in the treasury of God for your mite as well as David's millions.

1 Chronicles 22:15

God will always find the right man in time for his own work, in his Church there are "all manner of cunning men for every manner of work."

1 Chronicles 22:10, 11

May such a blessing come upon every young man here! May the Lord be with thee, my son! May the Lord prosper thee, and may he make thee a builder of his house in years to come!

1 Chronicles 22:12.

How much wisdom will be wanted by the young brethren present who hope to be builders of the house of God! When the Lord says to you, "Ask what I shall give you," ask for divine wisdom, ask to be taught of him, and ask that you may have grace to do his will in all things.

1 Chronicles 22:13.

It is a great thing for a Christian to keep his courage up; and especially for a builder of the Church of God to be always brave, and with a stout heart to do God's will, come what may.

1 Chronicles 22:14

We are unable to tell exactly the amount of precious metal prepared by David; we have to take into account the value of gold and silver in his day; it was probably not so great as it is now. We know this much; it was an enormous sum which David had gathered for the building of the house of God.

1 Chronicles 22:15.

We must have the workmen; they are more precious than the gold. They cannot be put down at any sum of silver: "there are workmen with thee in abundance."

1 Chronicles 22:15

God will find for his Church enough men, and the right sort of men, as long as he has a Church to be built; but he would have us pray him to send forth labourers. We forget that prayer, and hence we have to lament that there are so few faithful servants of God. Cry to the Lord about the lack of labourers; he can soon supply as many as are needed.

1 Chronicles 22:16

A very nice text for stirring up idle church-members, who are well content with being spiritually fed, but who are doing nothing for the Lord: "Arise therefore, and be doing, and the LORD be with thee!"

1 Chronicles 22:17, 18.

What a good reason for working! What an admirable reason for giving! What an excellent reason for helping with the work! "Is not the LORD your God with you?"

1 Chronicles 22:18

If he gives you rest, you are to take no rest, but to get to his work. He is the best workman for God who enjoys perfect rest. It is always a pity to go out to preach or teach unless you have perfect rest towards God. When your own heart is quiet, and your spirit is still, then you can work for God with good hope of success.

The fighting is over; now go ahead with your building.

1 Chronicles 22:19.

Do not go to build a house for God, and think that is all that is required. You want spiritual communion with God; and you will not do even the common work of sawing and planning and building aright unless you seek God, and are in fellowship with him.

May God teach us some lessons by this reading! Amen.

1 Chronicles 28

Exposition by C H Spurgeon

1 Chronicles 28:1.

David, in his old age, and soon to die, summoned a great representative assembly of the notables of his kingdom.

1 Chronicles 28:2.

He was ill, and obliged to keep his bed; but; he left his couch for this solemn occasion. He did not even remain seated, although extremely weak; but he stood up upon his feet.

Those who read carefully will notice the sweetness of David's style now that he is about to die. It was after the great sin of his life, and after he and his subjects had suffered because of his numbering the people, that he calls the men before him "my brethren." He had sometimes spoken of them as his servants; but now he adopts a very humble style, and putting himself on a level with them, he says to them, "Hear me, my brethren, and my people."

1 Chronicles 28:2, 3.

Admire the frankness of David in telling the people what God had said to him. There is no other biography in the world like the Bible, for it tells the faults and follies of those whose history it records. David was a man after God's own heart; yet, as he had been used

as a sword, for the defense of God's people, and the destruction of their enemies, he could not be permitted to build the temple. He frankly tells the people all that God had said; it would not reflect any honor upon himself, but it was true, and therefore he kept nothing back. One falls in love with David for the frankness of his utterance. When a king, and an aged man, and just about to die, he tells the people all this story.

1 Chronicles 28:4.

He delights to dwell upon the election of God. It was not by the right of primogeniture that he was chosen king; it was by the will and good pleasure of God. Judah was one of the younger tribes, and yet it was made the royal tribe. In Judah, the house of Jesse was of no great importance; yet God chose it as the royal family; and in the household of Jesse, David was the youngest, yet the Lord "liked" him, and chose him to be king over all Israel.

1 Chronicles 28:5.

David seems to harp upon this sweet string of the divine choice. I wonder that so many good people are afraid of this blessed doctrine. They fight shy of it; they seem to run away at the very sound of the word "election." Yet is it the very joy of saints. God hath chosen them, and ordained them to be his servants.

1 Chronicles 28:6-8.

Thus he talked with the great number of the nobility and chief men of his kingdom who were gathered round him.

1 Chronicles 28:9.

God is very dear to us; but perhaps under no aspect is he more tenderly near us than as the God of our father: "My son, know thou the God of thy father."

1 Chronicles 28:9.

What a covenant this was under which Solomon stood! Alas! he was not as true to God as he should have been; and though we hope he was not east away for ever, yet under his rule Israel began to decay, and he pierced himself through with many sorrows in his latter days.

1 Chronicles 28:10.

It is fine to hear this old man, in his weakness, stirring up the young man. We generally expect to see the youths full of zeal, and the old men somewhat slow; but grace can turn the tables against nature. Here the old man, feeble as to his body, is vigorous as to his spirit.

1 Chronicles 28:11. He had it all ready in his mind; and before he died, he passed over the plans of that wonderful piece of architecture to his son Solomon.

1 Chronicles 28:12, 13.

Everything was laid down, catalogued, and arranged so that Solomon had only to follow the plans given to him by his father, and all would be right. Think of the love of David to his God. Though he might not build the temple, he would draw the plans for it; and though he might not live to see it completed, yet he would, in his own mind, arrange all the courses of the priests and the Levites, and every detail, even to the placing of the vessels of service in the courts of the Lord's house.

1 Chronicles 28:14, 15.

Or, the candelabra.

1 Chronicles 28:15.

They were not for the burning of candles, but for oil lamps. There was a Lamp-stand, with seven lamps upon the stand; and there were ten of these in the temple. There was only one in the tabernacle; but there were ten in the temple. David arranged everything. Those seven-branched golden candlesticks stood like pastors of the church; and the little silver candlesticks were carried about like evangelists, who go from place to place that the whole house of God may be served with light. Everything was by weight. God knows what he would have in his house, and he measures out to each one according to his need.

1 Chronicles 28:16, 17.

I like to think of David planning all these little things, first receiving instruction from God, then waiting upon God for further direction, and thinking not only about the great golden candelabra, but about the silver candlesticks, and the flesh-hooks, and the howls, and

the cups, and the basons. They who love God love everything that has to do with him; they have a holy concern even for the smaller matters pertaining to the house of the Lord.

1 Chronicles 28:18-20.

Do not talk about it; do not sit down, and dream over the plans, and think how admirable they are, and then roll them up; but, "Be strong and of good courage, and do it."

1 Chronicles 28:20.

What a pretty touch that is! "The LORD God, even my God, will be with thee."

1 Chronicles 28:20. He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD.

Therefore, be of good courage, you that are working for God, for he will not fail you, nor forsake you (Heb 13:5), until you have finished all the work (Eph 2:10, cf Jn 4:34, Jn 17:4, Rev 11:7) for the service of the house of the Lord. (ED: THE SERVANT OF THE LORD IS IMMORTAL UNTIL HIS WORK FOR THE LORD AND IN THE LORD IS COMPLETED TO THE GLORY OF THE FATHER. AMEN).

1 Chronicles 28:21.

God always finds men for his work. We sometimes see a lot of cowards run away, and we say to ourselves, "What will happen now?" Why, God will find better men than they are! And when there seems to be a paucity of really valiant men in Israel, God has them in training; and that awkward squad out there will yet become a band of brave men for the service of the house of God.

Thus the grand old man finished up his life by starting another to carry on the work which he was obliged to leave.

DEVOTIONALS
C H SPURGEON
Morning and Evening
Faith's Checkbook

1 Chronicles 4:22 (Morning and evening)

"And these are ancient things." — 1 Chronicles 4:22

Yet not so ancient as those precious things which are the delight of our souls. Let us for a moment recount them, telling them over as misers count their gold. The sovereign choice of the Father, by which he elected us unto eternal life, or ever the earth was, is a matter of vast antiquity, since no date can be conceived for it by the mind of man. We were chosen from before the foundations of the world. Everlasting love went with the choice, for it was not a bare act of divine will by which we were set apart, but the divine affections were concerned. The Father loved us in and from the beginning. Here is a theme for daily contemplation. The eternal purpose to redeem us from our foreseen ruin, to cleanse and sanctify us, and at last to glorify us, was of infinite antiquity, and runs side by side with immutable love and absolute sovereignty. The covenant is always described as being everlasting, and Jesus, the second party in it, had his goings forth of old; he struck hands in sacred suretyship long ere the first of the stars began to shine, and it was in him that the elect were ordained unto eternal life. Thus in the divine purpose a most blessed covenant union was established between the Son of God and his elect people, which will remain as the foundation of their safety when time shall be no more. Is it not well to be conversant with these ancient things? Is it not shameful that they should be so much neglected and even rejected by the bulk of professors? If they knew more of their own sin, would they not be more ready to adore distinguishing grace? Let us both admire and adore tonight, as we sing—

"A monument of grace,
A sinner saved by blood;
The streams of love I trace
Up to the Fountain, God;
And in his sacred bosom see
Eternal thoughts of Love to me."

1 Chronicles 4:23 (Morning and evening)

“These were potters, and those that dwelt among plants and hedges: there they dwelt with the king for his work.” — 1 Chronicles 4:23

Potters were the very highest grade of workers, but “the king” needed potters, and therefore they were in royal service, although the material upon which they worked was nothing but clay. We, too, may be engaged in the most menial part of the Lord’s work, but it is a great privilege to do anything for “the king”; and therefore we will abide in our calling, hoping that, “although we have lien among the pots, yet shall we be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.” The text tells us of those who dwelt among plants and hedges, having rough, rustic, hedging and ditching work to do. They may have desired to live in the city, amid its life, society, and refinement, but they kept their appointed places, for they also were doing the king’s work. The place of our habitation is fixed, and we are not to remove from it out of whim and caprice, but seek to serve the Lord in it, by being a blessing to those among whom we reside. These potters and gardeners had royal company, for they dwelt “with the king” and although among hedges and plants, they dwelt with the king there. No lawful place, or gracious occupation, however mean, can debar us from communion with our divine Lord. In visiting hovels, swarming lodging-houses, workhouses, or jails, we may go with the king. In all works of faith we may count upon Jesus’ fellowship. It is when we are in his work that we may reckon upon his smile. Ye unknown workers who are occupied for your Lord amid the dirt and wretchedness of the lowest of the low, be of good cheer, for jewels have been found upon dunghills ere now, earthen pots have been filled with heavenly treasure, and ill weeds have been transformed into precious flowers. Dwell ye with the King for his work, and when he writes his chronicles your name shall be recorded.

1 Chronicles 5:22 (Morning and evening)

“There fell down many slain, because the war was of God.” — 1 Chronicles 5:22

Warrior, fighting under the banner of the Lord Jesus, observe this verse with holy joy, for as it was in the days of old so is it now, if the war be of God the victory is sure. The sons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh could barely muster five and forty thousand fighting men, and yet in their war with the Hagarites, they slew “men, an hundred thousand,” “for they cried to God in the battle, and he was entreated of them, because they put their trust in him.” The Lord saveth not by many nor by few; it is ours to go forth in Jehovah’s name if we be but a handful of men, for the Lord of Hosts is with us for our Captain. They did not neglect buckler, and sword, and bow, neither did they place their trust in these weapons; we must use all fitting means, but our confidence must rest in the Lord alone, for he is the sword and the shield of his people. The great reason of their extraordinary success lay in the fact that “the war was of God.” Beloved, in fighting with sin without and within, with error doctrinal or practical, with spiritual wickedness in high places or low places, with devils and the devil’s allies, you are waging Jehovah’s war, and unless he himself can be worsted, you need not fear defeat. Quail not before superior numbers, shrink not from difficulties or impossibilities, flinch not at wounds or death, smite with the two-edged sword of the Spirit, and the slain shall lie in heaps. The battle is the Lord’s and he will deliver his enemies into our hands. With steadfast foot, strong hand, dauntless heart, and flaming zeal, rush to the conflict, and the hosts of evil shall fly like chaff before the gale.

Stand up! stand up for Jesus!
The strife will not be long;
This day the noise of battle,
The next the victor’s song:

To him that overcometh,
A crown of life shall be;
He with the King of glory
Shall reign eternally.

1 Chronicles 9:33 (Morning and evening)

“And these are the singers ... they were employed in that work day and night.” — 1 Chronicles 9:33

Well was it so ordered in the temple that the sacred chant never ceased: for evermore did the singers praise the Lord, whose mercy endureth for ever. As mercy did not cease to rule either by day or by night, so neither did music hush its holy ministry. My heart, there is a lesson sweetly taught to thee in the ceaseless song of Zion’s temple, thou too art a constant debtor, and see thou to it that thy gratitude, like charity, never faileth. God’s praise is constant in heaven, which is to be thy final dwelling-place, learn thou to practise the eternal hallelujah. Around the earth as the sun scatters his light, his beams awaken grateful believers to tune their morning hymn, so that by the priesthood of the saints perpetual praise is kept up at all hours, they swathe our globe in a mantle of thanksgiving, and girdle it with a golden belt of song.

The Lord always deserves to be praised for what he is in himself, for his works of creation and providence, for his goodness towards

his creatures, and especially for the transcendent act of redemption, and all the marvellous blessing flowing therefrom. It is always beneficial to praise the Lord; it cheers the day and brightens the night; it lightens toil and softens sorrow; and over earthly gladness it sheds a sanctifying radiance which makes it less liable to blind us with its glare. Have we not something to sing about at this moment? Can we not weave a song out of our present joys, or our past deliverances, or our future hopes? Earth yields her summer fruits: the hay is housed, the golden grain invites the sickle, and the sun tarrying long to shine upon a fruitful earth, shortens the interval of shade that we may lengthen the hours of devout worship. By the love of Jesus, let us be stirred up to close the day with a psalm of sanctified gladness.

1 Chronicles 28:9 (Faith's Checkbook)

Seekers, Finders

"If thou seek him, he will be found of thee." 1 Chronicles 28:9

WE need our God; He is to be had for the seeking; and He will not deny Himself to any one of us if we personally seek His face. It is not, if thou deserve Him or purchase His favor, but merely if thou "seek" Him. Those who already know the Lord must go on seeking His face by prayer, by diligent service, and by holy gratitude: to such He will not refuse His favor and fellowship. Those who, as yet, have not known Him to their souls' rest should at once commence seeking, and never cease till they find Him as their Saviour, their Friend, their Father, and their God.

What strong assurance this promise gives to the seeker! "He that seeketh findeth." You, yes you, if you seek your God, shall find Him. When you find Him, you have found life, pardon, sanctification, preservation, and glory. Will you not seek and seek on, since you shall not seek in vain? Dear friend, seek the Lord at once. Here is the place, and now is the time. Bend that stiff knee; yes, bend that stiffer neck, and cry out for God, for the living God. In the name of Jesus, seek cleansing and justification. You shall not be refused. Here is David's testimony to his son Solomon, and it is the writer's personal witness to the reader. Believe it and act upon it, for Christ's sake.

1 Chronicles 29:14 (Daily Help)

Jesus gave His blood for us; what will we give to Him? We are His, and all that we have, for He has purchased us into Himself—can we act as if we were our own? Oh, for more consecration! And to this end, oh, for more love! Blessed Jesus, You do receive with favor the smallest sincere token of affection! You do receive our poor forget-me-nots and love tokens as though they were intrinsically precious, though indeed they are but as the bunch of wild flowers which the child brings to its mother. We will give You the firstfruits of our increase and pay You tithes of all, and then we will confess "of thine own have we given thee" (1 Chronicles 29:14).